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AMERICAN vs. ENGLISH GUNS.

In these days of advanced scientific and general progress, when the light of Christianity and the universal brotherhood of man ought to be sufficiently potent to prevent conflict and bloody strife amongst the various civilized nations and peoples, greater efforts than ever are being put forth to bring to perfection instruments for warfare and human destruction. Each of the *great* powers of the earth, aye, and some of the *lesser* powers also, are straining their every nerve to secure the latest improvements in armor-plated steam-ships and monitors, rifled breech-loading and steel cannon, steel and chilled-iron projectiles, repeating and breech-loading rifles, &c., &c.; and in many respects great results have been attained —what the end will be, and whether these facilities in the art of prosecuting war will tend to render *war* less frequent, and sooner ended when entered upon, is a matter for thoughtful consideration.

The improvements in cannon, both as to rapidity of fire, and the weight and penetrating force of projectiles, originated the idea of armor-plating ships, which, carried into practice, has created a rivalry between these two forces of assault and defence that is producing tremendous and fearful results.

A wide spread impression exists that American ordnance is much more powerful and efficient than British ordnance; and to dispel the groundless apprehensions of a large portion of the British public, the London *Engineer*, under the heading adopted for this article, effectually settles this question, and shows that the wonderful 20-in. calibre gun so much vaunted by American writers, is admitted by the best informed to be as yet but an experimental gun, and that there is not a line of reliable evidence to prove that those immense charges of powder have ever been fired within 20-in. guns, behind projectiles of adequate weight; and that "there is hardly any evidence whatever in existence regarding these guns, for the very evident reason that, practically speaking, there are no such guns to collect information about."

The only gun that really comes into competition with the best English ordnance, is the 15-in. bore Rodman gun, and this the *Engineer* says is much inferior to the 12-ton broadside gun of the British Navy, or the new 9-in. calibre gun with which the British Navy is now being supplied, either as to rapidity of fire or penetrating power of projectile.

A masonry target, faced with a rolled iron plate 4-in. in thickness, was recently constructed at Fortress Monroe, upon which was brought to bear 15-in. Rodman smooth-bore and 12-in. rifled guns, at a range of only 350 yards; and yet, says the *Engineer*, "It is especially noteworthy that both the 15-in. gun and the Dyer rifled gun not only failed to penetrate the target as a whole, but actually failed to penetrate a 4-in. plate even when the backing only consisted of sand." Yet Major Palliser, in England, with a 9-in. gun and but 43lb. of powder, drove a shot right through a target of 8-in. solid plate, with a backing of 18-in. of teak and an inner skin of iron. Although "The American guns failed absolutely to pierce the 4-in. plate, yet it is as certain as anything can be that it is impossible to back a 4-in. plate with any known material arranged in any known way, so that a hardened projectile fired from the 9-in. English gun at short range will not penetrate it." Again, says the *Engineer*, "We know that a plate 4 times stronger than the American plate has been pierced by them; and the experiments proved that even 14 feet of masonry were unable to prevent the complete penetration of shot fired with but 36lbs. of English powder; and it is certainly not too much to assume on such data that a 4-in. plate backed up with 6 feet only of masonry, would be penetrated at every round by English guns firing hardened pointed projectiles with full charges. It required eleven rounds to complete the destruction of the American target—we fancy the same task would have been more thoroughly accomplished by Major Palliser with half the number." Not only does this writer believe that the English 9-in. is more powerful than the 15-in. American guns, but that it is "the most wonderful weapon in the world." He argues, however, that "it would be folly to attempt to maintain that it will retain this supremacy for any lengthened period," and therefore advocates that now, in time of peace, England should try her hands at 15-in. guns, that their construction may not be forced upon her in time of war. America is doing her best to successfully produce the 20-in. gun, Krupp is about to send a 15-in. cast steel gun to the Paris Exhibition, and England is now manufacturing some half-dozen 600 pounders wrought-iron guns at Woolwich. "It will not be satisfactory that England, the very home of iron and coal, the birth-place of Vulcan, should suffer herself to be beaten in such a race."